

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Remarks on Authorization of the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccines for Children Under Age Five and an Exchange With Reporters
June 21, 2022

The President. Thank you very much. Thanks.

As you could tell, I didn't want to leave the clinic. [*Laughter*] Those children were wonderful.

Thank you, Arseme—Arsema, and—for that introduction. And Jill and I were honored to visit your clinic today. We met with your fellow nurses and staff who are stepping up each and every day. And we met with families of young children. And there were about, I guess, 17, 18 families there waiting for their vaccine shots or have just gotten their vaccine shots and, finally, COVID-19 vaccinations for children over 5 years of age. Finally, some peace of mind. You know, this is—or, shall I say, under 5 years. We have them for over 5 years. But over 5 months to—6 months to 5 years.

And a historic—this is a very historic milestone, a monumental step forward. The United States is now the first country in the world to offer safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines for children as young as 6 months old. In the first time in our fight against this pandemic, nearly every American can now have access to lifesaving vaccines.

And we're ready. My administration, with the help of the CDC, has been planning and preparing this moment—for this moment for a long time. Since I took office, we've been committed to making sure every parent has the opportunity to protect their children from COVID-19. We've secured enough doses, and we're launching a comprehensive effort with States, local health departments, pediatricians, family doctors, pharmacies, rural health clinics, community health centers, and other trusted messengers and partners to get the word out to get—help to get shots in arms.

Parents will soon be able to start scheduling an appointment and addressing vaccines at pediatricians' offices, children's hospitals. Our largest pharmacies—partners and—that are Walgreens, CVS, and Walmart—are already scheduling appointments for later this week.

And starting today, you can go to vaccines.gov and find information and appointments near you. More and more locations will be ramping up, and more vaccines are delivered to providers in your areas every day.

These vaccines are safe and effective and are approved after extensive scientific review by the Food and Drug Administration, the FDA, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the CDC. But I know some parents might have questions. I encourage you to talk to the doctor—after you make a plan to get your child vaccinated—for your children older than 5 years of age.

For everyone else: Get your shots. Get your boosters.

And let's be clear: Elected officials shouldn't get in the way and make it more difficult for parents who want their children to be vaccinated, who want to protect them and those around them. This is no time for politics. It's about parents being able to do everything they can to keep their children safe.

Together, we've come to—a long way in our fight against COVID with vaccines, treatments, and other tools that are widely available. More than 220 million Americans are fully vaccinated.

More than 100 million Americans are boosted. Daily deaths due to COVID-19 are down 90 percent. And now vaccinations are available for nearly every American.

And we'll remain vigilant. We will make sure that this is not only a good day, but it's good from this point on, proof that there is nothing beyond our capacity when we work together as the United States of America.

I want to thank you again, Arsema. And may God bless you, our health care workers across the country and continue—who continue to step up and help put this pandemic behind us.

And, Doc, did you want to say anything? You don't have to.

White House COVID-19 Response Coordinator Ashish K. Jha. I'm happy to, sir.

The President. All right. Okay.

Coordinator Jha. Or just—whatever you like.

The President. All right. [Laughter]

Oil Industry/Renewable Energy

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Yes.

Q. Quick question on the Chevron CEO's complaint today. He said that your administration has largely criticized the oil and gas industry and at times vilified it, and that the administration would need to take a change in approach in order to make progress on reducing energy prices and to increase supply. Do you have a reaction to that, sir?

The President. He's mildly sensitive. I didn't know they'd get their feelings hurt that quickly.

Look, we need more refining capacity. This idea that they don't have oil to drill and to bring up is simply not true. This piece of—the Republicans talking about, "Biden shut down fields"—wrong. There are 9,000 of them, okay?

So they—we ought to be able to work something out whereby they're able to increase refining capacity and still not give up on transitioning to renewable energy. They're both within the realm of possibility.

Infrastructure Legislation/Federal Gas Tax

Q. Mr. President, if you were to decide to go for a Federal gas tax holiday, do you believe Congress would support that? And how would you feel about the fact that those funds are used for something that is a big priority for you, repair of roads and infrastructure and all of that? Is that work the——

The President. We have a giant infrastructure bill we passed—giant—1.2—1 trillion, 200 billion dollars.

Q. So you'd be worth—it would be worth it for you to——

The President. Sure. It's not like—you know, it's not like before. Look, it will have some impact, but it's not going to be impact on major road construction and major repairs.

Q. Sounds like you may have made a decision?

The President. Well, let me put this way: I'm in the process. I'll have a decision before the week is out. But you asked me an explicit question about whether or not—how would I feel; is it going to, in fact, make it difficult to maintain our roads. The answer is, we have plenty of capacity to do that.

Q. And do you think that you have their support?

President Xi Jinping of China

Q. Mr. President, are you going to talk to President Xi before you make any decision on the China tariffs? Do you want to have an engagement with him before you do things—anything on that?

The President. I plan on having a conversation with President Xi. We haven't set a time yet.

The President's Scheduled Travel to Israel

Q. Mr. President, any changes on your planned trip to Israel, given what's happened with the Parliament?

The President. No.

Q. Mr. President——

Q. Have you been briefed, sir——

Inflation

Q. Thank you. I think you spoke with Larry Summers recently. And he just said that in order to defeat inflation, we will have to accept higher unemployment. What would be your answer to that?

The President. Well, there's other economists who don't think that's the case. And we're in the process of working through all of this.

Gun Control Legislation

Q. And have you received a briefing on the guns legislation? The Senators say that they've gotten to a legislative text point.

The President. Very brief—briefly before I walked into the room to make sure I say: Let them announce it, and then I'll speak to it.

Q. Are you satisfied?

The President. Let them announce; then I'll speak to it.

COVID-19 Vaccination Efforts

Q. Mr. President, are you accounting—have—I know you're looking for more money from Congress for this vaccine campaign and for COVID funding going into the fall. How much of the supply of vaccines for these small children is there? And how many of the Nation's kids will you be able to get vaccinated before you need more money from Congress?

The President. Well, we'll get through at least this year. We do need more money. But we don't just need more money for vaccines for children, eventually; we need more money to plan for the second pandemic. There's going to be another pandemic. We have to think ahead. And that's not something the last outfit did very well. That's something we've been doing for—fairly well. That's why we need the money.

Thank you all very much.

Q. Mr. President——

Ukraine/Russia/North Atlantic Treaty Organization Summit in Madrid, Spain

Q. Ahead of your trip, sir: Prime Minister Boris Johnson said recently there is "Ukraine fatigue." There are some leaders who are calling for negotiations with Putin. Are you afraid that there is a fracture within this alliance that you've said has been united so far?

The President. No, I'm not afraid. But what I do think is, there—at some point, this is going to be a bit of a waiting game: what the Russians can sustain and what Europe is going to be prepared to sustain.

And I think we have to—that's one of the things we're going to be speaking at—in Spain about.

Thank you all so very, very much.

Q. Thank you, sir.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:55 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Arsema Desta, site lead, Anacostia/Congress Heights COVID Center in Washington, DC; and Michael K. Wirth, chairman of the board and chief executive officer, Chevron Corp. Reporters referred to former Secretary of the Treasury Lawrence H. Summers; Prime Minister Boris Johnson of the United Kingdom; and President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia.

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